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The Witch House at Salem: Winter

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HELEN S. CHASIN

THE WITCH HOUSE AT SALEM: WINTER

The cold burns like faggots.
 Bodies burn at us,
 hot and hellish in their musky linen.
 Rigid caps and dirty muslins move in the bare landscape,
 visible as nests.
 This is a bad place for secrets.
 Starchy ministers march in their stiff course
 toward God.
 Human smells and promises twist in our nostrils;
 men reek of their wants.
 This house has witnessed rare performances.
 At night pimply apprentices sweat in our lofts;
 stables are thick with proofs
 of the devil's purpose.
 Smiles wicked as wet dreams steam in our kitchens.
 Evidence abounds. Babies sicken,
 rocks cripple our blades.
 Virtues close into scolds.
 It proves unwise to prosper.
 Evil roosts here and will not give over,
 like a grim bird who cries
 admit! admit!
 There is no asylum.